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Shaping the Consolidated Plan

The Urban Development Department (UDD) is in the process of developing the **Consolidated Plan: 2005 - 2009**. This new plan will guide the Department's use of federal funds received from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) over the next five years.

Funds come to Lincoln through four HUD programs: *Community Development Block Grant* (CDBG), *HOME Investment Partnership Act* (HOME), *Emergency Shelter Grant* (ESG), and the *American Dream Downpayment Initiative* (ADDI). HUD's goals for these programs are to provide decent housing, provide a suitable living environment, and expand economic opportunities. UDD uses the funds in local programs that support housing, economic development and community development.

As part of the initial data gathering process for the new **Consolidated Plan**, UDD hired two businesses to solicit public opinion. **Olsson Associates** gathered opinion, through one-on-one interviews, from community members with expertise in housing and community development.

They also held several focus groups comprised of people knowledgeable in the areas of community services, community revitalization, housing, finance, real estate, and various cultures. The Community Development Task Force (CDTF), a 25 member advisory committee to UDD, also participated.

As a springboard toward a community-wide "visioning" session, staff of Olsson Associates and representatives of the CDTF worked with the **Community Learning Centers (CLC)** on an activity entitled "Kids and Cameras". Youth participating in CLC activities were assigned to teams, given cameras, and asked to go out into their neighborhoods and take pictures of how they would like their area to look in the future. Specifically, they were to take pictures of the following places: 1) the safest place, 2) the scariest place, 3) the prettiest place, and 4) the place where

they most like to play/hang out.

Next, the kids took their photos to Olsson Associates where, with the help of their graphic artists, posters with the pictures were created showing the responses to the four areas. Then, in early December, the public was invited to a "visioning" session held at Northbridge Community Center with a welcome and thank-you from Mayor Coleen J. Seng.

At the visioning session, the posters were set up around the room with the kids available nearby to answer questions and describe what they saw. They were also given the opportunity to present the posters to the entire group and describe what the pictures meant to them.

The session wrapped up with all in attendance given the opportunity to list the most important issues they felt UDD should address over the next five years.

The Urban Development Department also employed the services of the **University of Nebraska-Lincoln/Gallup Research Center** to conduct a random mail survey of residents in the low- to moderate-income areas of Lincoln, since this is the primary focus area for UDD projects. The survey asked the respondents about issues such as how satisfied they were with their neighborhood, how safe they felt, how satisfied they were with their home, and what they liked about their neighborhood.

With letters from the Mayor encouraging citizens to complete and return the survey, the response rate was over 50%. Gallup is in the process of analyzing the enormous amount of data and information. An initial draft report is expected to be presented to UDD in February.

All the information gathered by Olsson Associates and Gallup, along with other data that's being collected, will be used to help identify community priority needs in the **Consolidated Plan 2005 - 2009**. A draft of the **Plan** will be available this spring.



Above: Visioning session participants view one of the "Kids and Cameras" posters.

Below: An essay written by one of the children from the Elliott Community Learning Center.

What I Want for My Community in the Future

By: **Marinah Stearns, 4th Grade, Elliott Elementary School, Community Learning Center**

In the future I would like my neighborhood to be clean because it isn't so far. Too many people throw trash on the ground. If more people would stop throwing trash on the ground our neighborhood would be cleaner.

My neighborhood is pretty already, like the waterfalls and the gardens with the pretty flowers. If people keep throwing trash on the ground maybe no one would notice how pretty it is!!

Another thing that I like about my neighborhood is that we have a lot of different cultures. People come from all over the world. They live in our neighborhood.

The languages are Spanish, German, Bosnian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, African, Sudanese, Arabic, and Far-See.

This is important to me because in some neighborhoods they make fun of different people, but in our neighborhood we get along with each other.

People need to stop judging others by the colors of their skin and start looking within. Maybe we could all learn that different doesn't always have to be bad.

In the future the buildings should be colorful like the people in our neighborhood. Imagine the buildings all colored yellow, black, brown, pink, orange, and purple. The world would look like a rainbow. To look new and wonderful, just like us!

AV REDEVELOPMENT PLAN APPROVED

The Antelope Valley Project is referred to as a three-legged stool, with legs of transportation, storm water and community revitalization. Elements of the first two legs, transportation and storm water, are under construction. The third leg, community revitalization, received the go-ahead from Lincoln's City Council on November 29, 2004 when they approved the *Antelope Valley Redevelopment Plan*.

The *Redevelopment Plan* is a guide for redevelopment and enhancement of existing neighborhoods in the Antelope Valley area. The *Plan* contains two redevelopment projects, two proposed redevelopment concepts and 29 potential redevelopment concepts. The proposed and potential concepts are ideas that need more development before they technically become "projects" that can be implemented. The two projects that received approval with adoption of the *Plan* are the *Vine Street Redevelopment Project* and *Neighborhood Enhancement Projects*.

The *Vine Street Redevelopment Project* is located from 23rd to 24th Streets, Vine to "U" and is a new affordable housing/first time homebuyer project. It encourages a new type of higher density single family

housing that results in affordable homes for first time homebuyers. Sixteen single family homes will be constructed and two two-family homes. The project's design will be architecturally appropriate to respect the historic quality of the Hawley Neighborhood and its multicultural demographics. The project developer is Brighton Construction and the project itself is called *Liberty Village*. Construction is anticipated to begin in the spring.

Neighborhood Enhancement Projects involve a variety of strategies and improvements in strategic and concentrated areas to create a visible improvement to key portions of the neighborhoods in a relatively short time. The goal is to make strategic improvements that will then spur additional private reinvestment. This project applies to all neighborhoods in the Antelope Valley area, although efforts are first being concentrated in the Malone Neighborhood. Neighborhood Enhancement basically consists of the following strategies:

1. Improve important pedestrian and vehicular corridors. Improvements may include new street trees, lighting, sidewalks and curbs.

2. Identify existing housing that has been negatively impacted by past modifications inconsistent with the style or context of the house and neighborhood. For example, a porch that has been modified or removed. Provide financial incentives that encourage property owners to remodel their property in a manner that better fits the context of the house and the neighborhood.
3. Identify existing housing in good condition, but needing maintenance improvements such as painting, re-roofing, etc., and provide some type of financial assistance to aid property owners in making the needed improvements.
4. Identify the few instances of blighted and dilapidated housing, purchase and clear the property and either replat it to adjacent property owners or redevelop it into new mixed density housing. The intent is to strengthen key residential parcels or provide new housing products for the area.

The City is partnering with Neighborhoods, Inc. to implement the Neighborhood Enhancement Projects and planning and design are now underway.

THE URBAN PAGE

Volume 8, Issue 4 Winter, 2005
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UNIVERSAL IS EXPANDING

Oh, how times change. Just four years ago Universal Cold Storage employed 12 people in a 10,000 square foot facility just south of Lincoln's Historic Haymarket District. Today, the small company, created to store and distribute cold and frozen product for local customers, has expanded to three separate Lincoln facilities with nearly 600,000 square feet and customers from across the country.

With assistance from a CDBG-funded job creation loan, the company expanded into the former Nash-Finch distribution center near Lincoln's airport in late 2002. More recently the company has expanded into an additional facility formerly operated by Fleming Foods at 1601 Pioneer Blvd. With this new growth came additional opportunities resulting in the creation of a sister company called Universal Processing.

Development of this new company has allowed Universal to expand its processing business from the existing two USDA-certified processing rooms. A third USDA room, triple the size of the existing two, was re-

cently completed with assistance from a second CDBG-funded job creation loan.

"The assistance provided by the CDBG program has been absolutely vital to the successful creation of two Universal Companies," says John Jacobson, President. "Because of these two new companies, there are now 105 new jobs in place with another 25 to 50 planned through the next 12 months."

According to Jacobson, many of these new positions started near \$10.00 per hour and have been converted to salaried positions in the range of \$30,000 to \$35,000 per year. Many of the new additions to come will be skilled positions and have a salary range of up to \$50,000.

"From the perspective of cost-to-benefit ratio," say Jacobson, "few government programs can come close to this level of performance."

For more information about Job Creation Loans, contact Troy Gagner at 441-7862 or tgagner@lincoln.ne.gov.

WELL-TIMED WORDS

N. 48th Streetscape

Steady progress continues on the *North 48th streetscape project* and the University Place Redevelopment Plan. The streetscape is scheduled for completion in May. To date, the majority of the sidewalk replacement has been completed on North 48th between Huntington and Madison Streets. Infrastructure has been put in place for the installation of ornamental lighting which should be completed by March. Neighborhood signage, plantings, and median work will resume the moment winter releases its hold on the weather.

The *Northeast Printers Redevelopment Proposals* will be reviewed by a group of University Place business and neighborhood officials and city staff at the end of January.

The *University Place Implementation Committee* continues to meet on a regular basis. In addition to prioritizing elements of the North 48th Street/University Place concept plan, the Implementation Committee has initiated work on parking, traffic, and zoning goals and objectives.

Free to Grow is Growing

The *Free to Grow* team has started work in a third area of the Clinton neighborhood located between 27th & 30th, Holdrege to Dudley Streets. The team is made up of representatives from the Lincoln Action Program, Lincoln Police Department, Lincoln Housing Authority, Urban Development, Building and Safety, Health Department, Neighborhoods Inc., and Clinton Elementary School.

Free to Grow concentrates on improving the quality of life for residents by addressing crime, the environment, substandard housing, and health-related issues. Revitalization efforts so far have included helping neighbors establish Neighborhood Watch groups, increased code enforcement and police involvement, and neighborhood and graffiti clean-ups.

Mosaic Builds 5 Units

Mosaic, a nonprofit organization serving people with developmental disabilities, is currently accepting applications for its five new units recently completed in Lincoln. The barrier-free structure will house nine people and consist of four two-bedroom units and one one-bedroom unit. Mosaic partnered with the *Federal Home Loan*



In November, Douglas Theatres opened the doors both to their newest theater and the newest addition to Lincoln's downtown entertainment scene. The Douglas Grand, an architecturally distinct, state-of-the-art 14-screen theater complex located between 11th and 12th and O and P Streets, is expected to bring over a million moviegoers into downtown annually. Douglas has reported brisk ticket sales and the stream of pedestrians going between the Grand and downtown's many restaurants indicates that Lincoln's new address for a night on the town is the heart of downtown.

Bank of Topeka under their Affordable Housing Projects, the *U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*, the *Nebraska Department of Economic Development* and the *City Urban Development Department* through their Housing Development Loan Program to construct this facility at 63rd and Y Streets.

In 2003, *Martin Luther Homes* and *Bethphage*, two Nebraska-based organizations, merged to create Mosaic. Mosaic provides individualized services, living options, work choices, spiritual nurture and advocacy to people with developmental disabilities in more than 50 communities.

New Hartley Focus Area

Working together, the Hartley Neighborhood Association and Urban Development staff have completed the initial draft of the *Hartley Focus Area Plan* goals and objectives. City staff from the Parks and Recreation, Public Works, Police, Building and Safety, and Health Departments are now reviewing the draft plan. Highlights of the draft document include these possible improvements: neighborhood signage, enhancement of the streetscape on R Street between 27th and 33rd Streets, the promotion of home improvement programs, increased lighting at Hartley Park, and improvements to 33rd Street, including curb and gutter replacement, between O and Vine Streets.

FY2003 CAPER

The Executive Summary of the *FY2003 Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report*, otherwise known as the CAPER, is available for your reading pleasure on the City Web site at: www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/urban/comdev/

The CAPER is one of the federally required reports that allow Lincoln to receive funds through CDBG (Community Development Block Grants) and HOME (Home Investment Partnership).

If you would like a printed copy of the Executive Summary, call Opal at 441-7852.



In the Downtown Neighborhood, the Disabled American Veterans Thrift Store received a facelift through the Facade Improvement Program.



QUARTERLY QUOTE

"There's a special kind of magic that happens when you bring together people who genuinely love and care for their communities. We felt that on the night that the 'Kids and Cameras' parents and children joined with other community people to talk about their shared futures.

But I've also had the privilege of observing that magic during the months of meeting with a wide variety of Lincolniters in the focus groups and interviews. They care deeply about Lincoln's future, and they're not afraid to get involved. And, most of all, nearly all of them recognize what Urban

Development has done to help them make good things happen. So hurrah for the Consolidated Plan. It really is a 'living, breathing document' that has helped to make Lincoln, Nebraska, a place that epitomizes the good life."

*-- Karen Amen Jensen
Olsson Associates*

PRIDE 2005 -- SLIGHTLY REVAMPED

PRIDE is a very successful grant program that has been offered for several years by the City Urban Development Department. PRIDE stands for Promote Residential Improvement, Design and Enhancement. *We "pride" ourselves on our creative acronyms!*

PRIDE is available in eleven neighborhoods: Clinton, Downtown, Everett, Hartley, Havlock, Hawley/Malone, Near South, North Bottoms, South Salt Creek, University Place and Woods Park. PRIDE grants can be used for up to \$600 in materials for exterior repairs. It may not be used for labor or equipment other than minor items like paint brushes.

PRIDE has been revamped a little this year. Applications will be available one month earlier, in March, because all projects should be completed by August 31st, the end of the City's fiscal year.

PRIDE will still operate on a "first-come, first served" basis, so the applications will be dated and numbered as they are returned. Investors are eligible to receive a grant for one property each year. Homeowners who received a grant in 2004 are welcome to apply this year, but they will be placed on a waiting list to allow new homeowners first access. After May 31st, funds not yet used will be re-allocated to those on the waiting list in the order their applications were received.

As usual, **only households with incomes below 80% of median are eligible for PRIDE grants.** In addition, 60% of the grant still has to be spent on the house itself before money can be used on items that are not part of the house, like garages or fences.

The best change to PRIDE this year is that there are more funds available, so more people can receive grants! Please call Sandy at 441-5668 before **March 1, 2005** to receive an application, check your income eligibility, or determine if you are in one of the participating neighborhoods.

Or check online to see if your income qualifies:
www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/urban/real/income.htm